

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PN PQ

SUBJECT: TORRIJOS COMMENTS ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

1. COMMENTS ON THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BY CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT TORRIJOS AND FOREIGN MINISTER TACK-THE GENERAL'S IN RESPONSE TO A RECENT AP ARTICLE AND THE MINISTER'S IN CONNECTION WITH THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE KISSINGER-TACK STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES-HAVE BEEN ACCORDED FEATURE COVERAGE IN FEB 7 PRESS. THE FULL TEXT OF TACK'S EXTENSIVE COMMENTS, MADE IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA, ARE BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY. TORRIJOS' REMARKS WERE MADE DURING THE COURSE OF AN INTERVIEW WITH PANAMA'S CHANNEL TWO TV BROADCAST THE EVENING OF FEB 6.

2. NOTING THAT PRESS REPORTS "FROM THE UNITED STATES" WERE SAYING THAT A NEW DRAFT TREATY WOULD BE READY IN TEN WEEKS (A PROBABLE REFERENCE TO AP ARTICLE BY GEORGE GEDDA), TORRIJOS OBSERVED THAT "THIS COULD BE TRUE; IT COULD NOT BE TRUE; THESE WEEKS CAN CHANGE INTO TEN MONTHS OR TEN YEARS." THE GENERAL STATED THAT HE HAD "ALWAYS SAID THAT THE TIME FACTOR WAS NOT PREDOMINANT; WHAT IS PREDOMINANT ARE THE OBJECTIVES THAT ONE ACHIEVES IN THE NEW TREATY, OBJECTIVES THAT WILL HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED OR REJECTED BY THE POPULACE THROUGH A PLEBISCITE."

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3. TURNING TO THE STATUS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, TORRIJOS REMARKED THAT THEY WERE "PROGRESSING WITH SUFFICIENT SPEED." PROGRESS, HE SAID, "DEPENDS ON THERE BEING CLEAR GOOD INTENTIONS ON BOTH SIDES." TORRIJOS REPORTED THAT "ACTUALLY THERE IS A TEAM IN WASHINGTON TO FINISH PERFECTING WHAT WAS AGREED ON CONTADORA" AND STATED THAT "EVERYTHING APPEARS TO INDICATE THAT THIS YEAR WILL GIVE US A DATE FOR THIS GREAT EVENT."

4. COMMENT. TORRIJOS' COMMENT SHOULD DAMPEN SPECULATION, SPURRED BY RECENT REPORTS IN PRESS, THAT FINAL AGREEMENT ON A TREATY IS NEAR.

JORDEN

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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